

2022 CONSERVATION COMMUNITY BUDGET PRIORITIES

Funding to protect our natural resources is a priority for the conservation community, with a focus on a financial commitment to accelerate Chesapeake Bay clean up goals, investments in clean transportation, and funding for our natural landscapes.

Virginia Conservation Network and the conservation community have taken positions on the following budget amendments:

CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL LANDSCAPES

SUPPORT 375 #14h \$40 million in FY 23 and FY 24 for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. This amendment provides an additional \$40.0 million from the general fund each year to be deposited in the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, which supports our funding recommendation in Our Common Agenda.

SUPPORT 375 #1s \$20 million in FY 23, \$30 million FY 24 for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. This amendment increases funding for the Virginia Land Conservation Fund to \$40 million annually, consistent with our recommended funding levels in Our Common Agenda.

SUPPORT c-76 #2h \$2 million FY 23 for renovations of the Department of Wildlife Resources' Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center. This amendment provides funding to renovate the Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center located at the Buller Fish Hatchery in Marion, Virginia. This building has been instrumental in pioneering techniques for the recovery of Virginia's freshwater mussels and is consistent with our recommendation in Our Common Agenda.

TRANSFORMING TRANSPORTATION & BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

SUPPORT 121 #1h, #2s These amendments fund the previously codified Virginia EV Rebate Program, including a \$2,500 standard rebate for EVs, an enhanced rebate of \$2,000 for households 300% below the federal poverty line, price caps for new and used EVs, an advisory council, and sunset date.

SUPPORT 121 #6h, #1s This amendment provides \$20,000,000 from the general fund in FY23 and in FY24 for the Driving Decarbonization Grant Program Fund that HB351/SB708 would establish. The program will fund up to 50% of private developers' non-utility costs of EV charger installation, with \$5 million reserved annually for funding chargers in historically economically disadvantaged communities and increased grants for charger installations in these areas.

SUPPORT 126 #2h This amendment provides \$5,000,000 from the general fund in FY23 and in FY24 for the Virginia Rural EV Charging Network Program. The program, administered by the Virginia Tourism Corporation, requires establishment of at least three chargers in each electric cooperative's service territory and development of a marketing and awareness campaign to promote their use.

SUPPORT 447 #1s SB488 (McClellan) dedicates 7.5% of annual sports betting revenues to the Transit Transition Fund to support planning for the transition to zero-emission transit buses through a competitive grant process. This funding will result in an estimated \$900,000 in FY23 and in FY24.

SUPPORT 452 #2h This amendment provides \$15,000,000 in FY23 from the Commonwealth Transportation Fund for VDOT to establish a grant program to expand EV infrastructure in rural and underserved localities. Grants may be provided for chargers in publicly-accessible locations; priority given to projects in rural areas, low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, and communities with high ratio multi-unit dwellings.

SUPPORT 479.2 #1h, #3s To allocate \$20 million of the Commonwealth's current \$800 million balance, in ARPA funds for incentive and retention bonuses through December 2026. An allocation of \$20 million could stabilize the transit work force through the current labor shortage. – 40 transit agencies avg. \$500,000 each for ARPA essential worker pay incentives.



ENSURING AN EQUITABLE & INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT

SUPPORT 373 #1h & #1s These budget items extend the operation of the state's interagency environmental justice working group in the new biennium budget, as the previous authorizing budget language is set to expire on July 1, 2022. The working group is charged with conducting an assessment of the processes and resources required of state agencies to develop agency-specific environmental justice policies.

PROTECTING VIRGINIA'S WATER RESOURCES

SUPPORT 296 #2h This amendment provides \$600,000 per year to the Virginia Department of Health to continue studying the occurrence of PFAS in the Commonwealth's public drinking water, paying particular attention to small drinking water facilities, rural facilities, and facilities downstream or nearby potential sources of PFAS contamination like firefighting training facilities, unlined landfills, industrial sites, and wastewater treatment plants treating industrial wastewater.

SUPPORT 374 #2h This amendment provides \$300,000 from the general fund each year to the Department of Conservation and Recreation to develop and implement a statewide environmental literacy plan, and to provide assistance to community organizations related to environmental literacy education.

SUPPORT 374 #2h This amendment provides \$350,000 GF in each year to support two staff in the Office of Environmental Education recognizing the commitment Virginia made to its students in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the importance environmental education plays in developing and nurturing students.

SUPPORT 374 #3s, #1s, #3h, #1h Soil and Water Conservation District administrative and operations funding has not been updated in over a decade. The agricultural cost share program is fully funded in the proposed budget, including technical assistance. As efforts to reduce nonpoint sources of pollution intensify, district administrative and operations funding must also increase. Full funding of this program is vital for Virginia to meet our Bay TMDL goals as 76% of our remaining reductions must come from agriculture. To support district programming, Soil and Water Conservation Districts are requesting an additional \$3.6 million in support for operations and administration.

SUPPORT 374 #6h, #4s This amendment increases the amount of funding provided to districts for routine maintenance for district owned dams in both years. It also expands the use of funding for remote monitoring to include all district owned dams rather than just high and significant hazard in the first year. Funding for remote monitoring has been removed in the second year as all anticipated costs for purchase and installation will be met. Of significant importance is it shifts funding into annual maintenance so we can maintain installed remote monitoring systems.

SUPPORT 378 #4h This amendment provides \$300,000 per year to the Department of Environmental Quality to test fish in Virginia waterways for PFAS chemicals, to look for potential contamination.

SUPPORT 378 #6h, #13h, #1h These amendments provide \$320,000 to Department of Environmental Quality in Fiscal Year 2023 to support surface and groundwater testing for per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), "forever" chemicals linked to harmful health and environmental impacts. This testing will be used to better protect our critical water sources from suspected sources of PFAS contamination.

SUPPORT 382 #1s Funding for 2 new staff to prepare statewide mussel restoration plan.

SUPPORT 388 #1h, #1s Funding for 1 new staff to do oyster stock assessment.

SUPPORT 486 #7s This amendment provides an additional \$3.0 million in federal American Rescue Act Plan funds for improvements to the Fredericksburg wastewater treatment facility to address any potential fiscal impact of SB 355 of the 2022 General Assembly which adds the Fredericksburg wastewater treatment facility to the list of priority projects for the Enhanced Nutrient Removal Certainty Program.

SUPPORT 486 #8s This amendment provides \$40.4 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to Stafford County for upgrades to the Little Falls Run Wastewater Treatment Facility.

DEFENDING CLIMATE POLICY

OPPOSE 4-5.12 #1g This amendment directs state agencies and entities to begin terminating the Commonwealth's participation in RGGI and prohibits the expenditure of revenues generated from participation in RGGI without prior approval of the Governor.

OPPOSE 4-14.00 #3g The exact effect of this budget amendment is highly uncertain, but attempts to address electric utility rate review for RGGI costs incurred prior to the proposed repeal of RGGI. While enhanced ratepayer protections should be explored, these complicated policy decisions cannot be fully evaluated in the budget process, without public and stakeholder involvement, and as part of a repeal effort.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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Learn more about the
conservation community's
top priorities:
vcnva.org/our-common-agenda